

## Emergency Support Function #9 Urban Search and Rescue

**Primary District Agency:** Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department

**Support District Agencies:** DC National Guard  
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs  
Department of Health  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Mental Health  
Department of Public Works  
Emergency Management Agency  
Metropolitan Police Department  
Office of Contracting and Procurement  
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner  
Office of Unified Communications  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

*Non-Governmental Organizations:*

George Washington University Medical Center  
Howard University Hospital  
Potomac Electric Power Company  
Washington Gas Company

**Primary Federal Agency:** Department of Homeland Security/Emergency  
Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency  
Management Agency

### ***I. Introduction***

#### **A. Purpose**

ESF #9—Urban Search and Rescue rapidly deploys components of the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS) to provide specialized lifesaving assistance in the event of a public emergency involving structural collapse or other technical rescue.

#### **B. Scope**

Operational activities include conducting physical search and rescue in collapsed buildings; providing emergency medical care to trapped victims; assessment and control of gas, electricity, and hazardous materials; and evaluating and stabilizing damaged structures. Additional capabilities include trench-collapse rescue, confined-space rescue, high-angle rescue and swift-water rescue.

## ***II. Policies***

- A. As the primary agency for ESF #9, FEMS develops urban search-and-rescue (US&R) policy, provides planning guidance and coordination assistance, standardizes unit procedures, evaluates operational readiness, and funds special equipment and training requirements.
- B. An Incident Command System (ICS) will be implemented to effectively manage and control resources at the scene of emergencies, in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- C. The Personnel Accountability System will be used as an incident site US&R accountability system to track and control the movement of FEMS personnel.
- D. Standard operating guidelines (SOGs) are predetermined standardized US&R practices that enable the firefighting units to operate in a coordinated and safe method.

## ***III. Situation***

### **A. Disaster Condition**

Public emergencies vary widely in scope, degree of devastation, and threat to human life. For example:

- 1. In situations that entail structural collapse, large numbers of people may require rescue and medical care.
- 2. Because the mortality rate among trapped victims rises dramatically after 72 hours, US&R must be initiated without delay.
- 3. In the course of response, rescue personnel may encounter extensive damage to the infrastructure, such as buildings, roadways, public works, communications, and utilities. Such damage can create environmental safety and health hazards, such as downed power lines, unsafe drinking water, and unrefrigerated food.
- 4. Weather conditions such as temperature extremes, snow, rain, and high winds may pose additional hazards for emergency victims and rescue personnel.
- 5. In some circumstances, rescue personnel may be at risk from terrorism, civil disorder, or crime.

## **B. Planning Assumptions**

1. Many structural collapses may result from a natural disaster. They also may occur as the result of a significant manmade event.
2. At the time of a public emergency, there may be structural collapses elsewhere in the District. These structural collapses will draw upon the same resources (engines or other tactical and support resources) that would be needed to support US&R and other emergency operations. It must be assumed that some US&R resources will become scarce, resulting in the disaster-related US&R operations competing for resources.
3. Telephone communications may be interrupted.
4. FEMS 800-MHz radio communication may be compromised, either totally or in part.
5. Access may be hampered by bridge failures, traffic, landslides, damaged road systems, air traffic restrictions, etc., making conventional travel to the incident location extremely difficult or impossible.
6. Depending on the scope of the incident, Mutual Aid Agreements may need to be enacted to allow FEMS to access additional US&R resources from surrounding jurisdictions.
7. Efficient and effective mutual aid among the various local, state, and federal US&R teams requires the use of ICS together with compatible US&R equipment and communications.
8. Local residents, workers, and/or converging volunteers may initiate search-and-rescue efforts but will usually lack specialized equipment and training. (See ESF #15—Donations and Volunteer Management.)
9. In situations where there are significant US&R shortfalls in the area, and a Presidential Declaration of disaster or emergency has been made, ESF #9 may request federal assistance from FEMA and Federal ESF #9 US&R resources through the Consequence Management Team (CMT).

## ***IV. Concept of Operations***

### **A. General**

FEMS, as the primary agency for ESF #9, will activate the US&R system for any incident or anticipated incident that is determined likely to result in collapsed structures. The likelihood of activation depends on the nature and magnitude of the event, the suddenness of onset, and the existence of US&R resources in the

affected area. The FEMS US&R team is able to remain self-sufficient for approximately 48 hours.

## **B. Organization**

1. The US&R system is an integrated system of US&R units, support teams, and technical specialists.
2. The system is built around core units prepared to deploy immediately and initiate US&R operations on implementation of ESF #9 of the District Response Plan. Primarily, FEMS personnel, who are experienced and trained in collapsed structure search-and-rescue operations, staff these units.
3. Incident Support Teams (ISTs) provide coordination and logistical support to US&R units during emergency operations. They also conduct needs assessments and provide technical advice. Teams are formed with personnel from US&R units, District government emergency response organizations, and private sector organizations.
4. A Regional Incident Management Team (IMT) can be activated to support incident command system (ICS) functions.
5. Technical specialists provide expertise in various US&R disciplines. They are mobilized as needed from within the District and surrounding jurisdictions.

## **C. Notification**

1. In most cases, these types of incidents are reported directly to 911 at the Office of Unified Communications.
2. Upon notification by the Emergency Management Agency (EMA) of a potential or actual event requiring response, beyond normal response operations, the FEMS Chief or designee will ensure a telephone call or page is made through the Office of Unified Communications to notify all senior command staff officials.
3. Mutual aid support will generally be requested through the Office of Unified Communications and coordinated through EMA when necessary.
4. Numerous sources may notify the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) of incidents with the potential for structural collapse. EMA will notify FEMS.

## **D. Response Actions**

### **1. Initial Actions**

- a. The ESF #9 Coordinator—a FEMS officer with the rank of fire captain or higher, who will have a working knowledge of the SOPs, resources, and capabilities of FEMS, will:
  - Locate at the EOC within two hours of notification;
  - Establish communication links with primary and/or support agencies;
  - Establish communication links with the Incident Commanders;
  - Establish communications links with the FEMS senior command staff;
  - Obtain an initial situation and damage assessment through established intelligence procedures; and
  - Contribute to situation reports.
- b. Immediately following initiation of operations, the ESF #9 coordinator will establish and maintain a chronological log of US&R events and information obtained from the field.
- c. FEMS Operations will:
  - During the initial stages of the public emergency, serve as the single point-of-contact (POC) for responding task forces and IST members for situation information and response status of US&R resources;
  - Provide command and control of incidents and institute the incident management system including unified command as necessary.
  - Provide trained US&R personnel to the scene and activate the department's Mobilization Plan, as necessary, to call back off-duty personnel.
  - Provide sufficient technical equipment for immediate delivery to the scene.
  - Perform search and rescue as necessary.
  - Perform triage and emergency medical treatment as necessary and provide emergency medical technicians and paramedics to the scene with appropriate equipment.
  - Perform emergency medical transportation, as necessary, and provide EMS transport units to the scene.

## 2. Continuing Actions

- a. Retain an adequate on-duty force of US&R-trained personnel.
- b. Maintain preloaded shoring and bracing equipment truck(s).
- c. Maintain readily available back-up supplies.
- d. Ensure critical medical supplies are replenished.
- e. Activate agreements for emergency resupply as needed.
- f. Procure and maintain sufficient reserve ambulances to enable additional units to be placed in service as required.
- g. Request additional resources as necessary.

## V. Responsibilities

### A. Primary District Agency

**Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (FEMS)**—FEMS will coordinate the search-and-rescue operations and the use of rescue and extrication resources during public emergencies. The FEMS US&R team is dispatched with Fire and Emergency Medical units to incidents involving search-and-rescue efforts. Fire and Emergency Medical units will provide on-scene, pre-hospital emergency medical care.

FEMS establishes, maintains, and manages the US&R response system, including pre-emergency activities such as training, equipment purchase, and evaluation of operational readiness.

FEMS maintains a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with appropriate agencies to ensure a functional US&R team is maintained by having necessary specialists, not available with FEMS, trained and ready to respond as needed. FEMS also maintains mutual aid agreements to ensure additional immediate response if necessary from surrounding jurisdictions.

FEMS responds to and coordinates US&R operations for incidents of collapsed structures and the use of rescue and extrication resources during acts of terrorism.

### B. Support District Agencies

1. **DC National Guard (DCNG)**—DCNG provides search-and-rescue capability as well as temporary emergency shelters. DCNG can also provide traffic control, emergency transportation, evacuation of civilian

population, communications assistance, area security, protection from theft and looting, medical services, aircraft for monitoring, surface radiation monitoring, radiation hazard plotting, wind and weather data, and control of reentry, as needed, during US&R.

2. **Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA)**—DCRA will provide information and building plans for unsafe or collapsed structures to the extent that such information is available and plans exist. DCRA will also provide structural engineers to inspect these structures and serve on the IST.
3. **Department of Health (DOH)**—DOH will coordinate health and medical activities within the District through clinical assessment and management by health care facilities, mental health assistance for those affected, and assessment of health and medical needs.
4. **Department of Human Services (DHS)**—DHS helps provide for evacuees' needs, including food, bedding, supplies, and transportation, using contractual services of the National Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC).
5. **Department of Mental Health (DMH)**—DMH will coordinate mental health activities within the District through needs assessment and provision of critical incident stress management (CISM) for first responders and crisis counseling for victims/families and special vulnerable populations.
6. **Department of Public Works (DPW)**—DPW will provide on-site refueling and on-site sand and salt, as necessary, for slippery conditions. DPW will provide debris removal in accordance with their Debris Removal Plan. In concert with the Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP), DPW will help coordinate heavy equipment, operators, and riggers to support US&R efforts as necessary, per the Debris Removal Plan. DPW, in concert with OCP, will provide additional resources for delivery of shoring lumber to the site, as required.
7. **Emergency Management Agency (EMA)**—EMA will provide a logistical/resource specialist for IST. The mobile command van will be dispatched to the scene to gather information on the type of hazardous material involved and other data.
8. **Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)**—MPD will provide site perimeter security, traffic control, staging area security, and assistance with emergency evacuations during and after an incident to protect the health and safety of persons, as well as the integrity of the incident scene. MPD will also perform criminal investigations as necessary, and canine assistance as available for US&R activities.

9. **Office of Contracting and Procurement (OCP)**—OCP will provide procurement specialist to assist ISTs in acquiring necessary contracts, services, and resources.
10. **Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)**—OCME will respond to the scene and provide coordination of mass fatality efforts, including investigating, establishing temporary morgue(s), coordinating transportation of remains, performing postmortem examinations and identifications, securing evidence, certifying cause and manner of death, and releasing remains.
11. **Office of Unified Communications (OUC)**—OUC will facilitate communications and coordination among local, state, and federal authorities during regional and national emergencies.
12. **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)**—WMATA will respond with FEMS to any incident involving collapses and other situations in underground Metro property; will provide backup resources when District agency resources, personnel, and equipment must be supplemented in response to an incident that impacts Metro property; and will provide Metro buses, as needed, for evacuating the population.
13. **George Washington University Medical Centers and Howard University Hospital**—These hospitals will provide “go teams” for specific medical care, such as response for entrapped trauma patients.
14. **Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO)**—PEPCO will provide emergency response teams to address electric power utility disconnects as necessary.
15. **Washington Gas Company (WGC)**—WGC will provide emergency response teams to address natural gas utility disconnects as necessary.

#### C. Primary Federal Agency

**Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness and Response/Federal Emergency Management Agency (DHS/EPR/FEMA)**—DHS/EPR/FEMA is the coordinating federal agency for ESF #9 under the National Response Plan and will provide direct, technical, and other support to the District through the District counterpart ESF, in this case FEMS, if needed, including calling in US&R teams from across the country.

Upon the Presidential Declaration of an emergency or major disaster under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Act as Amended, April 1999, the Department of Homeland Security will implement the NRP. Initially, federal agencies will operate out of the FEMA Regional Response Coordination Center. Later, when the Joint Field Office (JFO) is established near the disaster area, the agency ESF representatives that comprise the Emergency Response Team will be in the JFO. DHS/EPR/FEMA US&R teams will deploy to the disaster site when requested to assist the Incident Commander in operations.